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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT,
FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2004

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL
Erdogan: Bombs in Iraq, Palestine amount to 'state terror' -
Vatan
Ankara: Israel goes too far - Milliyet
Sharon deals blow to Turkish-Israeli relations - Milliyet
US angry at Israel - Turkiye
Pentagon: We hit militants, not a wedding - Sabah
US troops raid Chalabi's residence - Vatan
US shifts on Chalabi - Hurriyet
Second Afghanistan duty for Turkey - Sabah
TUSIAD: Turkey must continue with IMF - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS
PM Erdogan: Israel applies state terror - Cumhuriyet
UN denounces, US criticizes Israel - Radikal
Sharon kills children in Palestine, US in Iraq - Yeni Safak
Iraq torture scandal deepens with new photos - Zaman
Hawks hate Hersh for revealing Abu Ghraib photos - Zaman
US breaks ties with Chalabi - Cumhuriyet
US operation against 'old friend' Chalabi - Radikal
Chalabi receives Saddam treatment - Yeni Safak
Chalabi made mistakes that US did not forgive - Sabah
Gul receives Cyprus support from Moscow - Zaman
Arafat: Jerusalem belongs to Turks as well - Yeni Safak
US admits Guantanamo captives are tortured - Yeni Safak

BRIEFING

Turkey's leaders criticize Israeli operations: On Thursday, PM Erdogan strongly criticized Israel for killing Palestinian civilians and demolishing their houses. 'There can be no legitimate reason for killing civilians,' Erdogan said, and urged world leaders to take action against Israeli 'state terrorism.' Meanwhile, FM Gul warned on Thursday that recent incidents in Palestine might have a 'negative effect' on Turkey's relations with Israel. 'Israel has gone too far,' Gul said, adding that 'attacking civilians is unacceptable.' Meanwhile, seven lawmakers from the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Group met with Palestinian leader Arafat in Ramallah yesterday. 'Jerusalem belongs to Turkey as well,' Arafat said, adding that Turkey had a responsibility to restrain Israel.

Turkish troops to Afghanistan: "Sabah" reports on the front page today that the US has asked Turkey to take command of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan for a second time beginning in February 2005. If Turkey accepts the command, the number of Turkish troops in Afghanistan would increase from the current level of 240 to 1,500. Speaking at the airport before departing for Romania, PM Erdogan acknowledged that Turkey had been asked to send additional troops to Afghanistan. He said the proposal is under consideration, but no decision has been made.

Cyprus: Russian FM Lavrov said in a meeting with Turkish FM Gul in Moscow yesterday that Moscow supports establishment of trade relations with the Turkish Cypriots. Lavrov called for an end to the economic isolation of northern Cyprus. Gul reiterated to Lavrov Turkey's demands for direct international flights to northern Cyprus and unrestricted access for foreign vessels to Turkish Cypriot ports.

PKK establishes new party in Syria: PKK/Kongra-Gel has founded a new political party in Syria, "Cumhuriyet" reports. The paper claims that the newly-established Democratic Unity Party (PYD) is an effort to shield the organization's illegal activities in the region. "Cumhuriyet" asserts that the riots in Syria's Kamishli village on the Turkish border in March were provoked by 2,000 PKK infiltrators into the province. The terror organization is still active in Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

2.5 million Turks attend mosque daily: 2.5 million people in Turkey go to the mosque every day, and 11 million Turks attend Friday prayers, according to a report prepared by CHP lawmaker Bulent Tanla. 55 percent of Turks between 18-25, and 71.4 percent of those between 35-46 fast during the holy month of Ramadan. There were 76,445 mosques in Turkey as of January 2004, and 1,420 new mosques are under construction.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Iraq

"The Future of Iraq" Ferai Tinc observed in the mass appeal Hurriyet (5/21): "American military sources are claiming that the recent military operation near the Iraqi-Syrian border was not an attack against civilians, but rather targeted a group of resistance fighters. These claims are not being taken seriously by the Arab press. Similarly, the claim by Israeli officials that Israeli forces are not targeting children in Gaza is also being discounted. The Middle East is moving toward a colossal crisis. . The US has started working on a plan to transfer authority to Iraqis. We should read this as transferring authority to pro-American figures within the Iraqi political structure. The elimination of Ahmad Chalabi as a political force is part of this process. However, the US plan does not have any chance for success. The US-designed new Iraqi administration will receive no support from the people, particularly in the light of recent scandals involving US forces in Iraq. Even the most moderate Iraqis will not agree to be ruled by a group of collaborators. In addition, we should keep in mind the presence of radical Islamist terrorist organizations in Iraq. . For the foreseeable future, Iraq will continue to be a source of bad news. The conflict might even spread to the north of Iraq, a possibility that should concern Turkey. In sum, the fire in the Middle East is now beginning to spread."

"A Project without Buyers" Haluk Ulman wrote in the economic-political Dunya (5/21): "The Iraq quagmire is the result of the US administration's wrong policies, which resulted from poor advice provided by Washington's neo-conservatives. The case of Ahmad Chalabi is a typical example. Chalabi was favored by the neo-cons and their staffers despite his dubious record, which includes a conviction for bank fraud. . It will be interesting to see what the pro-Iraq war groups in Turkey will have to say at this point. Interestingly enough, however, these same circles are now pushing to support the next US project -- the Greater Middle East Initiative. This project does not even provide a clear vision about its objectives, and those who try to tailor a role for Turkey should think twice. No matter how laudable the goals may be, the project has absolutely no chance for success, especially after the post-war problems and the Abu Ghraib scandal. Nobody in the Arab world thinks the Bush administration's intentions are transparent. . It is certain that President Bush will do his best to 'sell' this project to the Europeans, but there don't seem to be any buyers in the market."

"The US is in Trouble in Iraq" Omer Ozturkmen observed in the conservative Turkiye (5/21): "The fact is, US diplomacy was mistaken in planning for the post-war scenario in Iraq. The US could never imagine the kinds of problems they were going to face there. The Iraqi people were expecting to watch Saddam's trial on TV while the president of the US focused on his re-election bid. Now, the torture photos from Iraq have recalled for the American people the long forgotten atrocities faced by American Indians. Let us see how the president will explain the loss of American lives in Iraq during his campaign. When put next to the torture the Iraqi people have suffered at the hands of the coalition, Saddam's Halapja massacre looks mild by comparison. Those obscene photos are already being circulated among international terrorist groups to recruit fighters against the United States. The Bush Administration, which at one time put sacks over the heads of allied troops, now buries its own head to hide its shame."

The US is paying the price for excluding Turkey in its policies in Eurasia. It looks that that price will continue to be paid."

EDELMAN